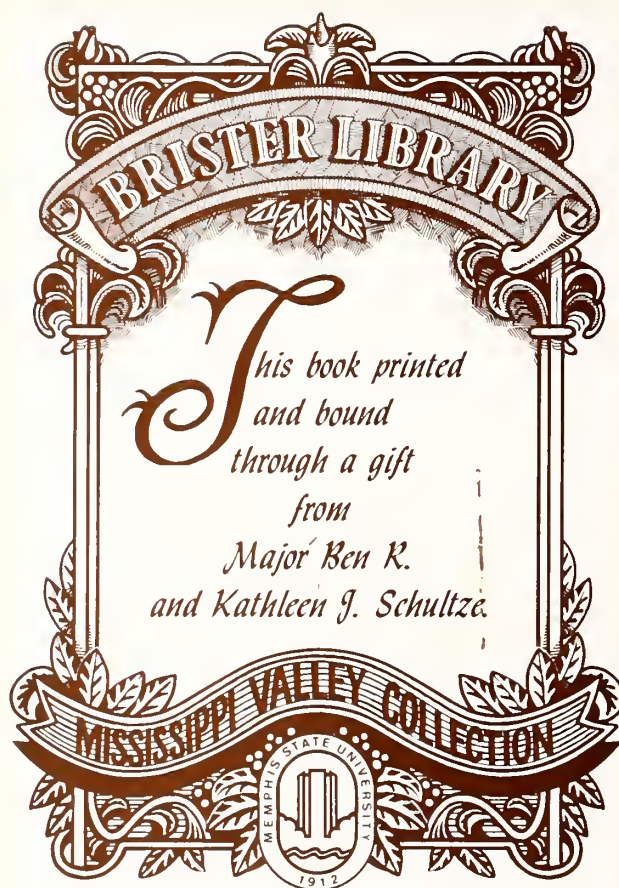


AN ORAL HISTORY OF THE WINFIELD DUNN ADMINISTRATION
INTERVIEWS WITH
MRS. ROBERT A. PRICE

BY - CHARLES W. CRAWFORD
TRANSCRIBER - BETTY WILLIAMS
ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE
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INTERVIEWS WITH MRS. ROBERT A. PRICE

OCTOBER 14, 1977

BY CHARLES W. CRAWFORD

TRANSCRIBER - BETTY WILLIAMS

ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE

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PLACE

Jackson, Mississippi

DATE

October 14, 1977.

*Winfield Dunn Project
(Jane Harris Price)*

Miss Robert Price
(Interviewee)

Charles W. Crawford
(For the Mississippi Valley Archives
of the John Willard Brister Library
of Memphis State University)

living in Meridian when Winfield was born. Of course, we were a very close family then. There were four boys, Uncle Aubert, Winfield's father, Charles, Dick and Tom. Then my mother was Elizabeth Dunn and another sister was Etta Dunn. There were six of the Dunns there in Meridian, and we had a family get together just about every Sunday when I was a child which were just most enjoyable times.

DR. CRAWFORD: When were you born?

MRS. PRICE: In October 15 of 1924, tomorrow.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, that is a real coincidence. My birthday was on the 12th, day before yesterday.

MRS. PRICE: You are a Columbus Day boy.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes. Now let's see, what was your father doing in Arkansas at the time?

MRS. PRICE: He was working in the oil fields. I am not real sure of what type oil rigs and this type of thing. He had been in Louisiana and Texas and loved it. But my mother finally convinced him, and especially her daddy convinced him, to come back to Meridian. So he did go back to Meridian and worked with my grandfather in some capacity, in building and so forth, for a while. Then he really became associated with the forestry service. So he was sort of a weekend daddy which made my mother even more close to the family I suppose. We got to see the family members an awful lot in those days.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now, let's see, you lived in Meridian from

the year you were born in 1924, late in the year since you were about a month old. What year did you leave?

MRS. PRICE: Well, I married in July of 1943 and really have never lived there since then. I was eighteen and nearly nineteen when I married. So we moved to Greenville, South Carolina where Robert was in the Air Force. We never have really moved back to Meridian.

DR. CRAWFORD: Your first eighteen years were spent in Meridian?

MRS. PRICE: In the old family homestead, I might add. My grandfather died, when I was six so he left the home to my mother and my Uncle Tom. So we lived in the house (the old homestead) until I married.

DR. CRAWFORD: Tell me something about the old homestead, where was it located and what was it like?

MRS. PRICE: It was a big old nine or ten-room house right across the street from Rush's Infirmary. Of course, I can hardly stand to go by there now because they have torn that down and the other three houses that my granddaddy had built for his children right around it. And they have torn them all down I think, and they are parking lots for Rush's Infirmary.

DR. CRAWFORD: Who was this grandfather who built the house?

MRS. PRICE: C.W. Dunn. Winfield is C.W. Dunn too. He

goes by W.C. He is Bryan Winfield Culbertson. Then Chuck is another C.W. So we feel like we have another C.W. in the family, but my granddaddy was quite a character. There were very few people in Meridian when I was growing up who did not know him and remember him quite well because he was one of the pioneer families--he and my grandmother. [He was] just a real different kind of person I think.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you know when he had gone to Meridian?

MRS. PRICE: I believe it was in the 1902 or 1904 from Macon, Mississippi. It may have been in the late 1800's. I am not sure. I believe it was because Mother was born in 1899 and that was in Meridian. So it would have to be in the late nineteenth century.

DR. CRAWFORD: Your father was C.W.'s son?

MRS. PRICE: No, my mother was a daughter.

DR. CRAWFORD: That's right. Of course, your mother was Winfield's father's sister?

MRS. PRICE: Right.

DR. CRAWFORD: What did Mr. C.W. Dunn do during most of his life there?

MRS. PRICE: He had a livery stable. That was one of the main things he started and I believe it was right across the street from where the railroad station used to be. We have got some old pictures of it. Then he began building houses too. So he owned a good bit of colored property there in Meridian. I

think I remember everybody saying that he thought it was terrible if you let one penny stay in the bank. You were supposed to be letting it be working for you. So he was a pretty smart businessman I believe and was able to leave each one of his children some little money that they could use back in the Depression. He did die right in the early [part] of the Depression. [It was] 1931 that he died.

DR. CRAWFORD: Winfield would have been about four years old then. He had four sons and two daughters?

MRS. PRICE: He actually had four daughters and four sons, but two of the daughters had died earlier in their lives. At that time there were four boys and two girls. Winfield was actually our only little boy. Believe me everybody really appreciated him. It is a wonder that he wasn't so spoiled.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where did your mother fit in that group of six? Was she among the younger ones?

MRS. PRICE: She was right under Winfield's daddy. Two years younger than Winfield's daddy. So that she was actually the sixth child counting the two that died. And Dick was after her and Tom was the youngest. But she and Uncle Aubert were always very close.

DR. CRAWFORD: And were fairly close in age too.

MRS. PRICE: Yes, just the two years apart. Both of them were right full of the devil and like personalities and just sort of characters.

DR. CRAWFORD: Had they grown up together?

MRS. PRICE: Yes, and I think that Winfield's mother was one of my mother's very best friends while we were growing up. Because they hit it off very good and were very close friends all those years and which is another reason why we, Winfield and I, kind of grew up close as first cousins.

DR. CRAWFORD: Almost like brother and sister, weren't you?

MRS. PRICE: We really enjoyed each other, we really did. Of course, Ann, his sister, was just one year older than me. We were close in years as well as getting together so often.

DR. CRAWFORD: How far apart did you live in town?

MRS. PRICE: Well, back then it seemed like a pretty good way. I'd say about two miles.

DR. CRAWFORD: About what size was Meridian when you were growing up, say, in the thirties?

MRS. PRICE: Well, I'm not sure in the thirties, but when I graduated in 1941 the population was about 30,000. So it was pretty close to that.

DR. CRAWFORD: It was one of the larger towns in Mississippi?

MRS. PRICE: Yes, there wasn't too much difference between Jackson and Meridian back then. We always won all the football games, but Jackson was our main competition back then.

DR. CRAWFORD: You started to school back in Meridian,
 didn't you?

MRS. PRICE: I started in kindergarten out at Marion
 Park which was really closer to Winfield's
house than to ours but we were just on the edge of the district then. But
by the time I was in the first grade they had changed the district and I
went to another school, Stevenson, which was a little closer to our home.

DR. CRAWFORD: And Winfield started at Marion Park, I
 believe.

MRS. PRICE: Uh-huh. I believe Winfield went all the
 way through to the sixth grade at Marion
Park.

DR. CRAWFORD: He was about three years behind you, then?

MRS. PRICE: Yes, about three years.

DR. CRAWFORD: What sort of school was Marion Park, then?

MRS. PRICE: Oh, it was a real nice school. Meridian
 really had a good school system. In fact,
I think it still does have an excellent school system. When we graduated
from all those schools, we were ready for college because I know when I
went to college I wasn't all that good a student [not very studious]. I
was fairly in the top ten group, but I never had any trouble in college,
because I was well prepared. I am sure Winfield was too, because we had
good schools.

DR. CRAWFORD: I understand that Meridian was very good.

Now let's see, you went to college at Belhaven?

MRS. PRICE: Uh-huh.

DR. CRAWFORD: Why did you go there?

MRS. PRICE: I was headed for Ole Miss. But the summer before I went to college, in fact I was already enrolled at Ole Miss. That was the only school as far as my family was concerned at that time. But I visited in the Delta with another cousin that summer and fell madly in love with a delta boy and he was going to Hinds Junior College. So he talked me into going to Belhaven. So Mother stopped by on the way to Meridian to talk to Dr. Gillespie at Belhaven and decided that she liked it too so she let me go. Then I broke up with the boy in about a month after school started.
(Laughter)

DR. CRAWFORD: Then you were already at Belhaven?

MRS. PRICE: Already at Belhaven.

DR. CRAWFORD: How long did you go there?

MRS. PRICE: I only went two years because I married after two years.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was about '43. Since that time you have been away from Meridian?

MRS. PRICE: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: How close have you been to other members of the Dunn family since then?

MRS. PRICE: Oh, very close. We have always been close. We have been a real close family. Of course,

I mentioned that my mother and daddy moved to the coast when Daddy retired. Then when Uncle Aubert left Washington, he was working with Eastland for a few years about that time and it was in the early fifties. He and Aunt Dawn left Washington, and they moved to the coast because they didn't particularly want to go back to Meridian at that time. Uncle Aubert was in pretty bad health so they moved to the coast and bought a house not too far from mother and daddy. So once again, we were thrown with them a good bit. The children were grown then of course, all but Deon. She was still in college. We went down to see mother and daddy from Brookhaven at that time once or twice a month anyway so we got to see them a good bit.

DR. CRAWFORD: So in Meridian you lived in the old family home that C.W. Dunn had built (the one that he lived in). Where did Uncle Aubert live at that time?

MRS. PRICE: Let's see, that house is close to the high school there in Meridian. You know where the senior high school is? It used to be the Junior College also. Close to Magnolia Cemetery. They lived just a block east of that.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now, where did he live before that? He had lived in another house further out of town, hadn't he?

MRS. PRICE: Well, this was later.

DR. CRAWFORD: This was later--not earlier?

MRS. PRICE: Uh-huh. This is where Winfield was born.

DR. CRAWFORD: Which one?

MRS. PRICE: The one out by the high school. Of course,
we thought that was pretty far out then.

When they built that high school out there, we could not believe they were building so far out. Of course, now it is not far out. That's really the earliest I remember Aunt Dawn and Uncle Aubert living in a house. I'm sure they must have lived somewhere before that, but I don't remember.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where did they move after that?

MRS. PRICE: They moved to Washington when he was elected Congressman.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember what year that was?

MRS. PRICE: Let me think. I couldn't say exactly, but I would say about '35 or '36. Because I was pretty little.

DR. CRAWFORD: How many years was he there?

MRS. PRICE: Two. He didn't run for reelection.

DR. CRAWFORD: Ran once and was elected and then did not run again. I'll ask him later, but do you know why he decided not to run?

MRS. PRICE: Well, he was having some problems--health problems and so forth--and he just decided not to run anymore. He was just a born politician. I don't know if you have even heard him give a speech or anything, but you have missed some-

thing if you haven't . Well, any public speaking was right up his alley. I know daddy always took me to all his political speeches. We've heard in the audience many times that they wouldn't vote for him on a bet, but they sure wouldn't miss his speeches. (Laughter)

DR. CRAWFORD: What was so good about his speaking?

MRS. PRICE: Well, he has a, and Winfield has it, a sense of humor, a way with words. Uncle Aubert has a tremendous vocabulary. He has just a way with words that nobody else that I have ever known has. He could write about us eating at that delicatessen and it would be an experience that nobody else had ever had. He just has that knack. He really has tremendous talent. We have tried to get him to write a book all these years.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, it would be good if he would, but
however, I will get his memoirs on tape--
such as he is willing--and apparently they will be very good.

MRS. PRICE: He has a good bit of things that my sister has typed, but it is not in continuity.

We would have loved for him to have written a biography of the Dunn family or something like that. It would be tremendous! He has such potential. He can absolutely write, that is all there is to it. Very talented.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you know where he learned to speak that way? I know he had been to law school. I think both Ole Miss and University of Alabama.

MRS. PRICE: Mother said he was just born that way. He

could talk anybody into anything.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, do you think Winfield has some of the same ability?

MRS. PRICE: I really do. When we were in Meridian for that get-together, I can't remember if it was the Chamber of Commerce or who while Winfield was governor. I guess it was the year after he was elected. We heard Winfield give a regular talk. It wasn't a political speech, but it was very much like Uncle Aubert. I will say that Uncle Aubert has a little more wham than Winfield. (Laughter)

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, Winfield's speeches are sometimes rather quiet, but they were very persuasive.

MRS. PRICE: Very good. My husband just loves his speeches. I do too. I mean as far as what you would call an orator, Uncle Aubert is an old time orator.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, I think it was customary in the earlier days to be an orator more than it is now.

I think you get people in political leadership who deal with things in a more conversational way now.

MRS. PRICE: There is more informality. Uncle Aubert's was more along the orator's route.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you think Winfield has many opportunities to hear him speak?

MRS. PRICE: Well, yes, because he was very small when

he was in Washington, but then Uncle Aubert became an evangelist. I don't know if you were aware of that or not.

DR. CRAWFORD: No, I didn't know that.

MRS. PRICE: He was a Baptist evangelist and had a tent for awhile.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was that before or after he was in Washington?

MRS. PRICE: This was after going to Washington. And I only heard Uncle Aubert one time because-- I can't remember--because I was out of pocket. I really don't know why I didn't hear him more often. I can't remember. It may have been during my college years, but I believe it was the last of the thirties or in the late thirties. I am sure that he was excellent. He really could have been anything he wanted to be.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did you ever hear him preach?

MRS. PRICE: Oh yes, I heard him preach and he was just great.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did he serve very long as a Baptist evangelist?

MRS. PRICE: I don't really think but two or three years.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where did he preach during that time?

MRS. PRICE: I am not real clear on that. As I said, I really can't remember too much about it except I remember my mother saying, "That tent cost him a thousand dollars!" She thought that was atrocious! Anyway I have heard him at First Baptist

Church there in Meridian. Of course, Dr. Cox was the preacher there and he and Uncle Aubert were very good friends. Dr. Cox helped him in many ways in those days and I think it was really due to Dr. Cox that he went out to Texas and took that training as an evangelist.

DR. CRAWFORD: Apparently he has done about everything that he wanted to do.

MRS. PRICE: He has not had very many dull moments.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now when you left Meridian, your parents were still living in the old home place?

MRS. PRICE: Until they moved to the coast in '53, I believe.

DR. CRAWFORD: When did your Uncle Aubert move to the coast? Shortly afterwards?

MRS. PRICE: It was about '53 or '54. And then to Washington and they came there. Then his daughter, Ann, and her husband moved to the coast within the next year or two. They had been working. I believe Dan had been working in South Carolina. Somerville, South Carolina, I believe.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now you were in school with Winfield Dunn for awhile?

MRS. PRICE: Just really not ever in the same school.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, you were a few years ahead. You also saw him at family visits?

MRS. PRICE: Uh-huh.

DR. CRAWFORD: How close was the family?

MRS. PRICE: Very close. We were a very close family.

The Dunns were very loud and argumentative like some families are and so we got in on a lot of that, but it was exciting and we loved every minute of it. We played a good bit of penny poker and they even let us little ones play sometimes. I played with them a good bit. I can't remember Winfield playing it. We did used to sit down on the floor and play "Go Fishing" and things like that. The other kids did while they were playing poker.

DR. CRAWFORD: How do you play "Go Fishing"? I ought to know that, but I don't!

MRS. PRICE: You ask, "Gimme all your seven's." (Laughter)
Stuff like that. (Laughter)

DR. CRAWFORD: You don't know what cards people have, so you ask?

MRS. PRICE: Uh-huh.

DR. CRAWFORD: How often did you have family get togethers?

MRS. PRICE: Well, every holiday but actually when I was a child we got together pretty much every Sunday in some capacity. Maybe Uncle Charles and Aunt Eddy would have just ice cream out at the farm. This is where Winfield and I enjoyed a good many years when we were young. We would spend the night out there in the summer.

DR. CRAWFORD: Which one of your uncles is that?

MRS. PRICE: Uncle Charles.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where did he live?

MRS. PRICE: It was a farm out close to Marion, between Marion and off of (Highway) 45. I can't remember the name of the little town. Anyway, they had a real nice farm out there and he didn't do much planting and growing, but he did raise horses. Of course, Winfield and I just were fascinated with that so we did go out at every opportunity, and Uncle Charles adored Winfield.

DR. CRAWFORD: Let's see, he was one of his older uncles
 wasn't he?

MRS. PRICE: He was the oldest.

DR. CRAWFORD: What did he do there than keeping the farm?

MRS. PRICE: He worked on the railroad all those years.

Of course, he has had to retire. He was about sixty when he retired, but his health was poor and he died at about 63.

DR. CRAWFORD: Will you go through the names of the uncles
and aunts?

MRS. PRICE: All right. The oldest was Aunt Etta. She was the girl.

DR. CRAWFORD: How do you spell the name?

MRS. PRICE: E-T-T-A. Now of course, Gordie was the
oldest but she died. Do you want me to
tell you from the birth or just during my lifetime?

DR. CRAWFORD: From the time that they were born, if you would.

MRS. PRICE: Gordie May was the oldest daughter and from all reports a beautiful, beautiful girl.

I have read the write-up of her death in Meridian Star not long ago where she was perhaps one of the most beautiful young matrons Meridian had produced. She died at twenty with...Mother always thought it was probably breast cancer from everything that she is looking at from these days. But they just called it "milk breast" back in those days. She was twenty when she died. Then there was Aunt Etta just a couple of years younger than Gordie. Then Uncle Charles. Then Uncle Aubert. No, Clara Belle was after Aunt Etta. She died at nine. I forget about Clara Belle who died at nine with probably polio. Mother just looked back and wondered what it was because it was not diagnosed, I don't believe. Then there was Uncle Aubert, then my mother, Elizabeth, then Dick and Tom. Dick was two years younger than mother and Uncle Aubert two years older. Then Tom was eight years younger than Mother. He was quite a lot younger than Mother.

DR. CRAWFORD: Which uncle was Winfield closest to?

MRS. PRICE: Really Tom.

DR. CRAWFORD: Why do you think he was closest to his Uncle Tom?

MRS. PRICE: Tom was the youngest and he loved Winfield to death. Of course, he and his wife never

had any children either.

DR. CRAWFORD: What did he do in Meridian?

MRS. PRICE: He was a lawyer. He was really an outstanding lawyer. Winfield, like my sister, and I used to come over here and spend time with Tom and Bea when they lived in Jackson. He worked for the Home Owners Loan Corporation years and years ago. We would come over and spend a few weeks with Tom and Bea. They were young enough that they could play with us--take us swimming and all that kind of stuff. That's why we always loved to go where Tom and Bea were. So Winfield was very close to Tom and of course, when he was growing up in Meridian and when he moved back after the Navy he saw a lot of Tom. Uncle Charles died when Winfield was so little.

DR. CRAWFORD: He is the one who raised horses?

MRS. PRICE: Uh-huh. Winfield adored him, but Uncle Charles died when Winfield was--he died in about '54 so you can see...

DR. CRAWFORD: Was he close to any of the other uncles and aunts?

MRS. PRICE: Aunt Etta lived different places and was a lot older and so really I don't suppose you could say Winfield was close to her, but he was very close to my mother. Whenever he started going with a new girl he would take her over to meet my mother. Aunt Elizabeth would approve or disapprove.

DR. CRAWFORD: When did he start dating? When did he start

bringing girls for Aunt Elizabeth to see?

MRS. PRICE: Well, I guess about average. He probably didn't start dating till I left home. I left so young. You see, I wasn't but eighteen when I left home. Robert talked me into getting married too young. Thank goodness he did, I never would have found another one like him. Actually Winfield was just beginning to develop into a young swain when I left home. I have heard that he was quite a swain and that all the girls were very much in love with him.

DR. CRAWFORD: He did date a number of people.

MRS. PRICE: Yes, he was always so darling that you...

He was just a real unusual young man because he should have been spoiled and rotten. [And that] nobody liked him because he was the only boy in the whole Dunn family. Everybody took on over him.

DR. CRAWFORD : Of all the six brothers and two sisters, none of them had any sons?

MRS. PRICE: No.

DR. CRAWFORD: Except Aubert and he had one.

MRS. PRICE: Uh-huh.

DR. CRAWFORD: How many daughters were there?

MRS. PRICE: Do you mean the Dunn daughters?

DR. CRAWFORD: Uh-huh.

MRS. PRICE: Just the two daughters who grew to maturity. Aunt Etta just had one daughter herself.

Mother had two daughters, my sister, and me. Then of course, Dick had one daughter. Uncle Charles and Aunt Eddie had no children. Tom and Bea had no children. Uncle Aubert had three which was the biggest family.

DR. CRAWFORD: But only one was a boy--Winfield?

MRS. PRICE: That's right. Of course, the first one of Uncle Aubert's was a girl. When he saw my sister, my sister was three years older than me, mother said when Uncle Aubert saw that baby he said, "I've got to have me one of those babies." He just fell in love with Lucille. So he didn't mind Ann being a girl, I am sure. But when that baby was a boy, I'm telling you from all I heard, the whole family celebrated.

DR. CRAWFORD: And let's see, your grandfather was still living too.

MRS. PRICE: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: He died in the early thirties?

MRS. PRICE: Uh-huh. I was six and Winfield was about three. He was just a tiny little thing.

I remember my Aunt Eddie coming to get me at school, and Winfield was in the car with her. We talked about "Old Daddy". We called him "Old Daddy", not Granddaddy. We talked about him dying. Winfield said, "Well, I hope he is going to leave me those fishing tackle like he promised he would."

Aunt Eddie said, "Well, you know that he will." That's all I can remember from that conversation--Winfield being interested in some fishing stuff. I don't remember whether he got them or not. (Laughter)

DR. CRAWFORD: How long did he stay interested in fishing?

MRS. PRICE: Well, I think Winfield has always enjoyed fishing. All the Dunn boys loved it.

Uncle Charles fished all the time. Tom loved to fish and I know "Old Daddy" did. We have a lot of pictures with everybody holding up fish like everybody does. But I think Winfield was so thrilled that their first baby was a boy cause then he could relax. (Laughter)

DR. CRAWFORD: What about your religious activity in Meridian? Did you go to church together?

MRS. PRICE: No, we went to the Presbyterian Church.

I believe that Winfield always went to the Baptist Church with Uncle Aubert. Uncle Aubert and Aunt Dawn were Baptists. So they went to the Baptist Church though Uncle Aubert preached and taught around, as long as I can remember, in all the churches in Meridian. He started several adult classes back then that are still going. I think there is one called the Scrap-Iron Class right now that he started in one of the Baptist Churches now. He was just a real good organizer but we did not go to the First Presbyterian Church there. Really my granddaddy was Presbyterian. Old Daddy was Catholic as a boy, but then he joined the Presbyterian Church when he grew up.

DR. CRAWFORD: And his children belonged to the Baptist Church and the Presbyterian and any others?

MRS. PRICE: No, my granddaddy belonged to the Presbyterian Church and all of us went to the Pres-

byterian Church. In fact, I think Uncle Aubert's family is the only one that didn't go.

DR. CRAWFORD: They were the only Baptists?

MRS. PRICE: I believe so. Because all of them still belong to the First Presbyterian Church there up until they died.

DR. CRAWFORD: What activities did Winfield take part in in the Church when he was growing up?

MRS. PRICE: Well, I know he did sing in the choir. Not having been in the same church it would be hard for me to say except that I know he did take part in all the young people's things. I was going to Presbyterian things and he was going to the other ones so I couldn't say for sure. He's always been a real religious young man. I think that is one reason that he and Betty seem so special to my husband and me. Our church has always been so important to us as a family. That was one of the things that Betty and Winfield showed us the first time we visited them in Memphis was their church.

DR. CRAWFORD: Which church were they going to?

MRS. PRICE: They were going to that Methodist Church...

DR. CRAWFORD: Christ Methodist?

MRS. PRICE: Well, I can just see it but I am not sure what the name of it was. It was a Methodist church there. That was one of the first things that we got to see was their church. He showed us the Sunday School class that he was teaching

at that time.

DR. CRAWFORD: What do you mean that he was very religious?
Do you mean while he was growing up or
afterward?

MRS. PRICE: Always Winfield has been a very good religious
boy. He always had done the right thing
and felt the right thing and I think he just is.

DR. CRAWFORD: When did he get started teaching? Sunday
School teaching, that is?

MRS. PRICE: Well, probably not until Memphis. As far
as I know, he didn't teach in Meridian, but
he was so young then. But I know that was one of the first things he started
doing when they got married was teaching Sunday School.

DR. CRAWFORD: What were relations like between the dif-
ferent churches in Meridian when you were
growing up?

MRS. PRICE: Pretty close. Mother let us go to B.Y.P.U.
As I was growing up if we enjoyed it more
for awhile then we enjoyed our Presbyterian youth group she would let us
go to that. She was very lenient in that way, but of course, we had to
be at the Presbyterian Sunday School on Sunday morning. She was pretty
lenient in other respects. I think the churches in Meridian were always
pretty close...held meetings together at Easter and Thanksgiving and all.

DR. CRAWFORD: What did young people do in the thirties

and forties there?

MRS. PRICE:

Well, I look back on it and you didn't have TV or anything like that and what did we do? We went to an awful lot of picture shows, I can tell you that. We had dates at home all the time. My sister and I were three years apart, but I was just one year apart in school from her because she had started a year late and I had started a year early. So we were only a year apart in school. So we actually began dating. She didn't start dating too much sooner than I did. We had an awful lot of double dates and dates at the same time and we had fun just being at home. We would dance in the living room because we had that big old living room in the old home there. We had a piano. Mother could play a pretty good tune. Mother loved for us to have young people at home. She would go in the kitchen and fix you something to eat and stuff like that and she encouraged us to be at home with dates. I think that Winfield's mother did too. So we did an awful lot of dating at home really. We thought nothing of walking to the show and walking to Brookshire's to get ice cream afterwards and then walking home.

DR. CRAWFORD:

You didn't have to drive so much then.

MRS. PRICE:

We didn't worry about it if the boy didn't have a car. Of course, we were thrilled when they did have a car, but it didn't bother us if they didn't.

DR. CRAWFORD:

Now, that was during the time of the Depression that you were beginning to grow

up. Were you aware very much that it was a depression?

MRS. PRICE: No, I really wasn't. I had such a happy childhood that I have to look back on it and remember that we had a depression going on and we were handing out food at the back door during supper time. I have to really look back to remember that it was a depression because I know my mother worked at that sewing machine until 3 in the morning sometimes keeping my sister and I in cute clothes, but I thought everybodys' mama did that. It didn't dawn on me that she was short on money. They were real good years for me. I'm sure that family has a lot to do with it, because we did have a lot of family get-togethers.

DR. CRAWFORD: You felt the family was close. Do you think Winfield was influenced by that feeling?

MRS. PRICE: I am sure that he was because he is such a good family man.

DR. CRAWFORD: What do you mean he is a good family man?

MRS. PRICE: Well, he has thoroughly enjoyed his wife and children and he loved taking care of those babies just as much as Betty did. There wasn't anything they needed that Winfield couldn't do for them. He didn't have to holler for Betty because he could do it himself. I was just amazed at that, because my daddy certainly was not very good with us when we were little children as I look back on it. I don't think Uncle Aubert was. Aunt Dawn just

did it all, I think, but Winfield has thoroughly enjoyed his family.

DR. CRAWFORD: What about the extended family--aunts,
uncles and cousins and the rest of you?

What relationship would you describe was continued there?

MRS. PRICE: It's been kind of hard because we've all gotten separated and we are sort of giving out of family. It's very distressing. We are almost about to the end. We have Uncle Aubert. He is the last of the Dunns. And of course, Winfield's sisters and Dick's daughter are about the only ones left as cousins. We just don't have many. My children have not been able to be very close to their children because we just haven't visited very much. I think that is why we have enjoyed these few family reunions we've had. Winfield and I have talked about family reunions for years and then all of a sudden when he was going to be inaugurated, that's the first one we had as such since we have been grown.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now, tell me the circumstances of that one.

MRS. PRICE: Well, we were all excited that we could hardly stand it when he got elected. In fact, my Uncle Tom was in Memphis during the campaign. [He was there] during the voting right there with Deon. He told some tall tales about how he and Deon were taken in...Let's see who was it that drove them. One of the men in the highway patrol drove them to the place where Winfield was going to make his speech as he was elected. He really talked about how fast he drove and all. Deon and Tom were the funniest things talking about that. We were all real excited and Winfield made arrange-

ments and invited his whole family to come to his inauguration, and I mean the whole family, down to second and third cousins.

DR. CRAWFORD: Including children?

MRS. PRICE: Yes, including all the children. And everybody accepted. I think that Suzanne his niece, Ann's daughter, was in Europe at the time. She was working in Germany, I believe as a dental hygienist. She was not there and Winfield's mother was in the hospital. But other than that all our kith and kin were there. (Laughter)

DR. CRAWFORD: That was in Nashville for the inaugural?
What was the occasion like?

MRS. PRICE: Oh, it was just fabulous. We just stayed up practically till dawn. We didn't miss a thing, both nights. We all just gathered and talked and talked and we just had so much fun. I'll never forget it. It was just a wonderful time. Since then so many of the uncles have died and Winfield's mother has died and my daughter has died. We just never will be the same.

DR. CRAWFORD: You're very glad you had it then?

MRS. PRICE: Oh yes, it was wonderful. Everyone was so nice to us. Those Tennessee people just couldn't have been nicer to the family. Just lovely!

DR. CRAWFORD: Why do you consider her a good mother? Was she a good housekeeper or helper?

MRS. PRICE: Not particularly housekeeper. She loved to sew for them and she did sew a lot. She knitted a lot for them. She just took an awful lot of time with them. She was just so close to Winfield. She never minded going into the kitchen at any hour to cook something for them. Of course, I guess all mothers are good mothers. I mean most of us hope we are, but Aunt Dawn really was a special mother. I think Winfield was very close to his mother. He told me many times that he loved her so much. This was one of his sadder things that she was unable to enjoy his years as governor.

DR. CRAWFORD: What year did she die?

MRS. PRICE: I believe it was in about the last year that he was governor. That's when it was, because a good many of the men from Nashville came to the funeral in Magnolia. I think there was a bus full. That touched Winfield a lot.

DR. CRAWFORD: Her health was poor during part of the time?

MRS. PRICE: Oh, all the time. Because as I said, she was in the hospital while he was inaugurated. From then on it was just down hill. She was just not well a minute--just very sick. But he was a happy little boy. So she was a very good mother to him. She really was.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did they have enough space at home for pets and things like that?

MRS. PRICE: I'm glad you asked that, because Uncle Aubert was such a character. He always had such odd pets around for those kids--monkeys, a horse in the back yard at one time, and canaries all over the place, and always a dog or two. But that monkey was something else! I can remember that house out there. Of course, it seemed a long way out at the time.

DR. CRAWFORD: Can you describe his house?

MRS. PRICE: Yes, I can remember it real well. It was a nice house, a little brick house with a screened porch on the front and the living room was a nice sized living room. I remember the piano was close to the front door. I think it was a baby grand because I fell and slipped on the slick floors one time and hit my head on it and had to be carried to the hospital to emergency [room] and was sewn up. Then there was a little breakfast room off to one side by the kitchen and the dining room right thereby, three bedrooms. I can't remember if there was one or two baths. Back then, it was usually one. I don't remember but the one. It was a very nice house in a sort of new neighborhood out from town.

DR. CRAWFORD: How much space did it have around it?

MRS. PRICE: Well, right next to it there were about two or three empty lots--vacant lots. I know there was a negro family that lived up in one of those lots further with a little boy named Willie. He and Winfield played together constantly. They were just constant companions until they grew up and went to different

schools and so forth.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was during Winfield's early life?

MRS. PRICE: Uh-huh, during his early childhood. But Winfield still looks him up when he goes to Meridian. They see each other.

DR. CRAWFORD: What is Willie doing now?

MRS. PRICE: I don't know, but I do remember that Winfield said that he had seen him. One of the last times that I saw Winfield he said that he had seen him. They still know each other. They were so cute. I noticed in one of the family books that there was a darling little picture of the two of them. They were about four years old standing there together. It was real cute. He had a lot of room to play in. Their back yard was...we didn't have our yards groomed like we do now. It was just there with a fence. We thought nothing about having a horse right there in the city limits in the back yard. They wouldn't let you do it now. They loved it. I didn't because I was scared of horses. I would always go watch Uncle Charles' horses, but not to get on. Everybody else in the family pretty much enjoyed riding.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did Winfield ride them?

MRS. PRICE: Uh-huh.

DR. CRAWFORD: Of course, he went to his Uncle Charlie's to ride also.

MRS. PRICE: He never was afraid of horses. He enjoyed them. I was always scared of them. I just

had to watch. My sister loved them. She would ride them all the time. They always ran too fast when I got on them.

DR. CRAWFORD: Where did that monkey come from?

MRS. PRICE: I don't know, but I remember Uncle Aubert brought that thing over to mother's house to show it to her and he scooted away from Uncle Aubert and just went all over that house with Mama chasing after him. (Laughter) They kept him a good while I think, but they finally just had to get rid of him. He was a pest. He was into everything! But Uncle Aubert was one who would try anything. So his family got to try it with him. (Laughter)

DR. CRAWFORD: What were Winfield's favorite pets?

MRS. PRICE: You know, I don't know. I don't remember. The pets were not always that important to me so I don't remember. My sister loved them.

DR. CRAWFORD: But the house was always full of them?

MRS. PRICE: Yes, they had plenty of pets.

DR. CRAWFORD: What sort of reading did they do? Do you remember books, magazines, and newspapers?

MRS. PRICE: No, not really. Of course, Uncle Aubert has always been such an avid reader and has always read everything he could get his hands on, all types of reading that I am sure there was ample reading material there. I doubt there are very many books, philosophy and that kind of stuff, that he hasn't read. He still reads till his eyes give out. So I am sure that Winfield grew

up with that. I think that is so wonderful when children do enjoy reading.

DR. CRAWFORD: Did Winfield grow up learning to read like that too?

MRS. PRICE: I imagine he did. I can't say for sure because I don't really remember it. You know, as children you don't notice things like that that you ought to. For my own children one of mine loved to read and the others didn't in growing up. But now the other two love to. I guess I really didn't notice. My sister used to read an awful lot as she grew up. But my reading started later in life too.

DR. CRAWFORD: What do you remember about Meridian Jr. College?

MRS. PRICE: It was sort of exciting. About the time that Jackson built this Bailey Jr. High School, we built our high school in Meridian. And it was our eleventh and twelfth grades and then the two years of junior college all in one group of buildings. So many kids back then could not go to College. It was really a privilege to go at that time, because everybody did not get to go to college. But anybody could get to go to junior college there. So many people did get to go to junior college and then go two more years to senior college without it costing the family too much. So I didn't know too much about the college because I believe my sister was the first graduating class at the high school. Then I went to the eleventh grade the year she graduated. I was in the eleventh when she was in the twelfth. So actually while I was there is was all pretty new.

In fact, my art class was working on murals outside the auditorium so that was how new it was at the time. They only built it in '39 and completed it in about '39. Then later on in the years of course, they made that part of the high school and built the new junior college. I think it was a wonderful investment and good for Meridian. They have done some wonderful things there. I have friends that teach there.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was the tuition free?

MRS. PRICE: Yes, tuition free.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you know what Winfield studied while he was there?

MRS. PRICE: No, I really don't. As I say I was gone at the time. I was married at the time when Winfield was in high school. Our schools were set up a little differently than the way they are now. We had junior high, seventh, eighth, ninth and then we had early high school which was right next door to the junior high and it was ninth and tenth grades. Then you went way out to the high school for the eleventh and twelfth grades and to the junior college. So by the time I got to one, Winfield was just starting in the other with three years difference in our school. So Winfield and I were never in school at the same time. Of course, Meridian being a large town in those days--my graduating class had 270 and probably his was 300. So you knew your class but you didn't much know the other classes unless you just happened to go with somebody in another class.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was a large school for Mississippi.

MRS. PRICE: But that was the only high school in Meridian. Just like Central High is the only one here in Jackson at that time. Really if you weren't in that group at school at the same time you didn't know what was going on much. But Winfield and I have always remained close because of our early years. When my mother died, he called and he was real busy at the time, but he said, "Do you want me to come?" I said, "Well, sure I want you to come." They only had one car at the time, so he caught the bus and came to Meridian to Mother's funeral .

DR. CRAWFORD: About what year was that?

MRS. PRICE: This was in '64. I certainly appreciated it more then he'll ever know, but that was just the way he was. Of course, it was inconvenient and it was a long and laborious trip, but he still came. And he and Betty came to my oldest daughter's wedding. Came all the way down for that so we loved that. We did have a nice family reunion at her wedding because we had a supper over at my sister's afterwards. I believe everybody was there that time, but Uncle Aubert. But my mother died two or three years before. But at that time Dick and Tom and Aunt Dawn was here, but Uncle Aubert didn't make it. I can't remember why, but he wasn't there. Winfield and Betty and the children were here. We have them on some of our pictures. That was sort of a family reunion.

DR. CRAWFORD: What did you think of the educational quality of the school at Meridian?

MRS. PRICE: Oh, I just think it was excellent. We always had good schools in Meridian. When you graduated, you were prepared for college. I am sure Winfield felt it just like I did. Because when you go to college and you run into people who have been in a little small rural school and graduated valedictorian of that school and still don't know what in the world is going on, you realize what a good school you had. We did have very good schools in Meridian.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, it has been traditional for Meridian, hasn't it?

MRS. PRICE: I think it has. I have a lot of friends of whom I grew up with that are teachers there now. They say they are still really trying to keep the public schools up in Meridian.

DR. CRAWFORD: Is the junior college still in existence?

MRS. PRICE: Yes, they have a big junior college there now.

DR. CRAWFORD: They separated from the high school?

MRS. PRICE: Yes, it is over on the other side of town, in fact. It is way off from it. It is real attractive and I think on the par with Hinds and some of our better junior colleges.

DR. CRAWFORD: The schools have since been integrated, of course?

MRS. PRICE: Oh yes. Of course, I have heard that it

has been hard in Meridian, but the fact that most of the teachers have been real determined to try to keep them of high caliber according to my friends. And I do visit with them occasionally and talk to them on the telephone. And they are very well pleased that they have held up in the schools that they have. People just aren't willing to let them go.

DR. CRAWFORD: That's good. Have private schools been established since integration?

MRS. PRICE: Yes, they do have some private schools.

I know some people who have their children in a private school. But in Jackson it got to a point where you almost had to put your children in a private school. It sort of fell apart for awhile. It is such a shame, for Jackson had such good schools. I hope and I have heard that they are improving and that more are going back to them.

DR. CRAWFORD: Sometimes that is the case. They have problems and people leave and somehow it gets rebuilt. You know they had to be building good schools in the first place.

MRS. PRICE: I hope it will. I think of these young couples with two and three children, how can they afford to send them to private schools from the first grade on.

DR. CRAWFORD: I think the only solution that would help everyone is to make the public schools work well. So I am glad they are doing that in Meridian.

MRS. PRICE: I do too. We tried to stick to public

schools when my daughter was in the ninth grade when we had the big upheaval. But it just got to be a real problem by the end of the year. Then she was ready to change. We tried not to, but it just wasn't worth the struggle for us. It was our last child and we could afford to send her to a private school so we decided not to fight it. Of course, I think that is the way most parents are. I did have friends who decided to stick with it and it was just a total disaster for their children's whole high school career. So it just didn't work.

DR. CRAWFORD: Mrs. Price, what other incidents do you remember during the early days of the family that would give an indication of Winfield's early life and development?

MRS. PRICE: One thing that they used to do out at Winfield's house every Christmas was Uncle Aubert would buy up all the fireworks he could possibly get in his car and we would go out to their house on Christmas Eve and have a blowing up good time. (Laughter) Roman candles and all those things you would shoot up and the little parachutes would come down, every kind of fireworks you can imagine. We had a wonderful time doing it. I know it cost a fortune even back then. That was one thing that Uncle Aubert just loved. So we all did that. I think it might be of interest that Sonny Montgomery was a friend of the family. Winfield has probably told you that. I don't remember Sonny real well because he was a lot older than Winfield, but I do remember that he was around some. I remember when he was a teenage boy and playing tennis with Ann. I thought that was wonderful. But Ann grew up a little quicker than I did. Some girls mature a little earlier and

so Sonny wasn't in my generation exactly.

DR. CRAWFORD: Your Uncle Aubert comes across as a very
 strong character easily remembered but I
hear less about Winfield's mother. Can you tell me something about her
and the kind of person she was.

MRS. PRICE: Aunt Dawn was a, I imagine, that she was
 a typical giggly, feminine young lady. She
was a darling person--a real pretty person. And really one of the few
women who went to college in her generation. She went to MSCW, I believe
it was. I believe that was where she was going when they married. Aunt
Dawn was a very feminine person. Such a good mother. She enjoyed life
and sewed so pretty. She could make anything. She would usually have a
million things going on at once on her machine. My mother sewed all the
time too, but she got through with one thing and started on another and
she couldn't imagine Dawn starting so many things at one time. (Chuckle)
Having so many different things going. She stayed at home. Aunt Dawn
was not a socialite at all. She had friends, I don't mean that, but she
was a homemaker more than she was a gadabout. She used to take Winfield
and Ann to school and then come by mother's house every morning with Deon
and have a cup of coffee with mother. I always remember them being very
good friends when the children were little. She was a real sweet person.
I had a lot of love for her in my heart.

Then she was here and was so sick taking cobalt when Winfield was
first elected governor. She was at the University and then they put her

in Lakeland Nursing Home so she could go from there to take her cobalt. I used to try to get out to see her nearly every afternoon. She was very brave about it, but she certainly didn't have an easy time the last eight years of her life--full of pain and all.

DR. CRAWFORD: They had discovered cancer by that time?

MRS. PRICE: Yes. And she had a lot of other things wrong with her--diabetes and bone disintegration. Just a lot of things wrong with her. She was a real sick person. She still had that little giggle when you would talk to her, and that sweetness about her.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you know what would have influenced a boy most strongly in growing up in Meridian, say, in the thirties and forties?

MRS. PRICE: Well, I don't know. Give me some examples.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, do you think Winfield would have been influenced most by his father? Do you know if he had any special heroes? Any examples that he wanted to follow?

MRS. PRICE: Well, Winfield has always adored Uncle Aubert. Whether you would call that hero worship I don't know. Uncle Aubert had gone through some traumatic times. He still really loved him and stuck by him and everything. I think he still really admires him.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you think his interest in a public career might have been inspired by his father?

MRS. PRICE: Well, I do and the other two uncles being lawyers also. We always thought Winfield would be a lawyer. It never dawned on me that he would be anything else. So when he majored in business in college I just couldn't believe it. And I heard that he had majored in business and married and moved to New Orleans to work for some firm; we just couldn't believe it. And then he couldn't believe it either. It didn't work out so he went back to Memphis and went to dental school.

DR. CRAWFORD: About how long did he stay down there before he went back to dental school?

MRS. PRICE: I really don't think over a year.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember what the business was?

MRS. PRICE: I surely don't.

DR. CRAWFORD: I'll ask him later.

MRS. PRICE: I don't remember. I just was thrilled when he left there because I knew Winfield had so much potential and he needed to be doing something special. I think he thoroughly enjoyed being a dentist, but you see, you never know. The Lord prepares us for things that we don't know are coming up. Isn't it a remarkable thing that it works out this way! Now he really is a businessman and is thoroughly prepared for it, and yet he has seen the other side of things too from a medical standpoint. So I think he is thoroughly prepared for what he is.

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you know why he decided to go to dental

school?

MRS. PRICE: I really don't. I have always presumed that it was because Betty's daddy was a dentist, and he probably encouraged him to become one. He didn't have a son that was coming in with him and he probably hoped that they would (have a son) and when they didn't then he hoped that Winfield would. And Winfield was smart enough to take him up on it. Bless Winfield's heart, I'll say one thing for him. He was so skimping and saving, and he and Betty kept their noses to the grindstone and they put themselves through. They didn't get help from the family. They put themselves through. Winfield told me.

My daughter went up there to be a medical technologist when Winfield was a dentist and he said, "Jane, you will never guess where I am going."

And I said, "Where?"

And he said, "We are fixing to fly to Hawaii, and if you think it didn't hurt to plunk out that \$1,000, you just don't know how long I thought about it." So he was very saving and he believed in a pay-as-you-go thing. He just has a good outlook on things like that. He is not a spendthrift.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, that is the way he ran his campaign.

I think they made only two promises starting--that he was not going to fly in dangerous airplanes and not going to go into debt.

MRS. PRICE: I really believe he would stick to it. I

know he said many times he would want to go into the cafeteria and eat so bad, but he knew that would cost about 75¢ more than that sandwich that he was going to get. So that he would not let himself do it. So he was very saving. It certainly was commendable for him to do that.

DR. CRAWFORD: Very well disciplined.

MRS. PRICE: Yes, very well disciplined. Now I don't know where he got that because, as I say, the Dunns were not that type! (Laughter) Winfield must have gotten that from his Granddaddy Crum because I do think that Aunt Dawn's mother and daddy were very organized and very disciplined--just entirely different people from the Dunns.

DR.CRAWFORD: Why did Aubert change his work so many times?

MRS. PRICE: I wish I knew. He is just a restless person. I've always heard that people with too many talents are restless and can't settle down and get anything done. I really think this is the truth with Uncle Aubert. He had a marvelous voice. I think he could have even sung. He was, as I have said, a marvelous speaker, and preacher, and teacher, and lawyer. My goodness, he was a wonderful lawyer, still has clients, I think, But he just never could settle down to what he really wanted to do.

Sometimes I think it is best for us, as one of the teachers out at Belhaven told me that when my niece kept failing English, she said, "Give me an average student any day that will apply themselves instead of one

of these smart ones that just doesn't want to take time to do it." And I really think that was Uncle Aubert's trouble. He just had so much talent. He just couldn't settle down to use it.

DR. CRAWFORD: Evidently, he has done many different things, and successfully.

MRS. PRICE: He could do anything that he wanted to do. And I know that Winfield has thought about it so that has probably influenced Winfield more than he realizes. That when he set out to do something, he was going to finish it and do it. Because it has been a disappointment to me as I said, Uncle Aubert never would settle down and write a book or something because he really should have. In fact, he made much of his money at Ole Miss writing other people's term papers and essays. (Laughter)

DR. CRAWFORD: Do you remember any other instances about Winfield that would be helpful in biographical work.

MRS. PRICE: As I was telling you earlier, and since we have been talking on this interview I think he was a very patriotic man. As I told you about my husband being in the Air Force when we first married and Winfield just idolized him because he was the first hero he had gotten to meet and he was so impressed and so patriotic. He wanted to do his part for the country so badly that he could hardly wait to grow up and he almost didn't make it.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now what was his feeling about World War II?

Was he afraid it wouldn't last long enough?

MRS. PRICE: Well, I think he was afraid it would get over with before he could get in it. And being as young as he was, which was about 15 at the time, naturally if you are a young man with a fighting spirit, that was what you would think about instead of hoping it would be over with. He was very patriotic and is still very patriotic. He doesn't mind crying as the flag comes by or something and he does cry easily. When we get together we can cry, and it doesn't hurt either one of us.

DR. CRAWFORD: He still has that feeling of patriotism, I think.

MRS. PRICE: Yes, and he is compassionate. If he's thinking about you, he'll pick up the phone and call you. He doesn't wait for somebody else to do it. One thing that has meant so much to me since we have gotten older is that he will sit down and write me a letter. Only once while he was governor did he dictate me a letter. The rest of the time he wrote it himself. He continued to drop me a note off and on to keep up with me so I have appreciated that. He doesn't mind taking a little time for personal things.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, Mrs. Price, thank you very much. I think you have a very good picture of Winfield, and things that will be very good in a biography so that when something does appear, I believe you'll be seeing some of these things in it.

MRS. PRICE: I'm just sorry that I couldn't be more helpful.

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